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Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Cooperation with other regional bodies

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Introduction

1. During the period under review, the regional commissions have intensified their cooperation with other regional organizations. In Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, annex III, the Council called for close cooperation between the commissions and other relevant bodies in their respective regions.

I. Economic Commission for Europe

2. Close cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in their work on the economic and environmental dimensions of security has increased over the years. In view of its small size, the OSCE secretariat relies on ECE research and analysis as a basis for its substantive debates. In return, the OSCE provides ECE with an opportunity to present its studies, reports, conventions, norms and standards to a wider audience. For the current period, cooperation included: (a) substantive participation by ECE in the 2000 annual Economic Forum of OSCE, including delivery of keynote speeches at two main sessions and contribution of a paper on the review of economic commitments of OSCE member States (as contained in the 1990 Bonn document); and (b) participation in seminars held periodically by OSCE in preparation of its Forums. Furthermore, the second Conference on subregional cooperation was organized (Nantes, September 1999) by the Parliamentary Assembly of OSCE in partnership with ECE. The meeting facilitated an exchange of experiences among subregional organizations in the areas of energy, environment, corruption and social disparities among countries of the region.

3. ECE and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Organization have continued their close cooperation in a number of areas. Activities in which ECE played a principal role in the past year include the Ministerial International Round Table: BSEC at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century, Tbilisi, March 1999; the workshop on local and regional government in enterprise creation, Yerevan, March 1999; the Energy Ministerial Meeting, Tbilisi, April 1999; the BSEC meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Thessaloniki, April 1999; the Meetings of the Steering Committee on the development of the Black Sea Pan-European Transport Area (Tbilisi, June 1999, and Istanbul, November 1999); the seminar on cooperation of small- and medium-sized enterprises with transnational corporations, Baku, October 1999; and the workshop on environment protection and small and medium-sized enterprises, Baku, March 2000.

4. Since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and a Cooperation Agreement between ECE and the Central European Initiative (CEI) in May 1998, a meeting has been held annually in Geneva to review the ongoing cooperation and to agree on future joint activities. ECE has provided advice and cooperated with CEI in (a) development and implementation of the CEI Project Opportunity Methodology for investment and technical assistance project presentation (to date, 120 projects have been identified and presented under this mechanism to about 30 financial institutions); (b) organization of the annual CEI Summit Economic Forum (SEF) and other key meetings; and (c) development and implementation of activities in areas of common interest: small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), women entrepreneurship, microfinancing, real estate, competition law, agriculture standards, energy efficiency and statistical indicators. Some of these activities have been undertaken within the framework of the reconstruction process in South-East Europe, including the implementation of a CEI pilot project of microfinancing for entrepreneurs and family businesses in refugee hosting areas of Albania.

5. Cooperation between the Council of Europe and ECE focused on the organization of the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,[1] held in Geneva, January 2000. The Council of Europe provided its expertise which covered both substantive input for the meeting and support to the finalization of the agreed conclusions of the meeting.

II. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

6. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) convenes an annual consultative meeting among Executive Heads of Subregional Organizations and ESCAP to promote inter-subregional cooperation. Four selected areas have so far been identified for cooperation: trade and investment, transport and communications, human

resources development, and energy. The annual meeting is attended by the heads of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the South Pacific Forum (SPF) secretariat and ESCAP. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in Bangkok in June 2000.

7. ESCAP is implementing a project to facilitate intra- and inter-subregional trade in the SAARC region. The first national workshop on this topic was organized in Kathmandu, Nepal, in early March 2000. Other workshops are planned in several capital cities of the member countries.

8. ESCAP, jointly with SPF, organized a workshop on enhancing cooperation in trade and investment between Pacific island countries and economies of East and South-East Asia in Nadi, Fiji, in early November 1999. ESCAP/Pacific Operations Centre (POC) participated as a resource entity during the Forum of Economic Ministers Meeting in Apia, Samoa, in early July 1999. In addition, ESCAP/POC advisers maintain regular contact with the Forum Secretariat.

9. ESCAP has also continued to provide backstopping support to Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC) to foster socio-economic progress in the member countries.

10. In cooperation with the Asian Development Bank, ESCAP has continued its involvement in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) programme to enhance private sector development through trade facilitation. In cooperation with the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), ESCAP convened a meeting of Senior Officials on the future World Trade Organization trade agenda for developing countries in August 1999.

III. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

11. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has made deliberate efforts to expand and strengthen collaboration and coordination with other intergovernmental regional organizations. A significant part of the collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) took place within the context of the Tripartite Committee, in which all three organizations provide technical support in the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

12. In the case of IDB, the collaboration spanned a wide array of activities in areas such as social development, macroeconomic policies, population, statistics and water resources management. Activities included financial support from IDB to normative and operational activities carried out by ECLAC, substantive participation in each other's meetings, including the ECLAC sessions and the Bank Meeting of Governors, organization of joint meetings, joint activities and systematic efforts to improve division of labour between both institutions.

13. ECLAC continued collaborating with the OAS in the Caribbean subregion in the execution of joint projects on education and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMES), and with the Association of Caribbean States in the implementation of different aspects of the programme of work. ECLAC recently signed a technical support agreement with the Permanent Mechanism for Consultation and Policy Coordination of the Rio Group.

14. Activities were also undertaken within the framework of the inter-institutional cooperation mechanism between ECLAC, the Latin American Economic System (SELA) and the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), including the joint organization of the Fifth Meeting of Authorities Responsible for Trade Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean and a meeting of the Integration and Cooperation Secretariats of Latin America and the Caribbean. At the subregional level, ECLAC continued its close collaboration with the secretariats of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). ECLAC also provided technical cooperation to the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) Administrative Secretariat, on the setting up of an education information system for the group of countries concerned.

15. In the field of energy, ECLAC continued collaborating with the Latin American Energy Organization (OLADE) in the project on energy and sustainable development and in the organization of, and

technical support to, the Thirtieth Conference of Ministries of Energy.

16. ECLAC has also maintained contact with other intergovernmental forums in various sectors, especially meetings of the technical secretariats to the regional ministries of the environment, mining, energy, transportation and housing and urban development. In the case of mining and energy, ECLAC has also carried out activities with inter-parliamentary bodies.

IV. Economic Commission for Africa

17. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) deepened its collaboration with the other regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations in Africa, during the preceding year. ECA and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) collaborated in the substantive servicing of the fourteenth Conference of African Ministers of Industry held in Dakar, Senegal, in October 1999. ECA and OAU also collaborated in organizing technical backstopping for African member States with regard to the negotiations of a new cooperation agreement between the European Union (EU) and the African Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and for the preparatory processes for the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Seattle, United States of America and the tenth session of UNCTAD in Bangkok, Thailand. ECA and OAU collaborated in the preparatory process for the convening of the Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), held in May 1999 in Abuja, Nigeria. The CSSDCA process is aimed at developing a set of principles to enhance security, stability, development and cooperation in the region.

18. The African Development Bank and OAU are among the partners collaborating in the ECA initiative on the post-conflict reconstruction and development of the Mano River Basin countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. ECA and the Africa Development Bank, along with other organizations, participated in the preparation of the publication entitled *Can Africa Claim the Twenty-first Century?* A joint secretariat of ECA, OAU, the Africa Development Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are collaborating in the preparation for the 10-year review of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Africa.

19. The collaboration between the subregional intergovernmental organizations and ECA's subregional development centres (SRDCs) has continued to grow. The SRDC for Southern Africa and the SRDC for Eastern Africa jointly assisted in the restructuring of the secretariat of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). This involved preparing job descriptions and their classification, proposing redistribution of posts and designing a new performance evaluation system. The recommendations were considered by the COMESA secretariat and adopted by the COMESA policy organs. The SRDC for Southern Africa has also worked with COMESA and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the development of a Southern Africa Transport and Communication Commission (SATCC) framework for a road safety programme in Southern Africa, under the broad umbrella of the African Road Safety Initiative. The SRDC for Central Africa is currently providing technical assistance for the revitalization of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In pursuance of this effort, the SRDC for Central Africa undertook consultative missions to the 11 member States of ECCAS. The results of the consultative missions were presented to the Consultative Commission on ECCAS and a meeting of the Council of Ministers held in June 1999 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. Subsequently, the Conference of Heads of States and Government of ECCAS adopted a communiqué in which, *inter alia*, they requested ECA to prepare a study on an autonomous financing mechanism for the regional integration institutions of Central African countries. The SRDC for West Africa is collaborating with the secretariat of the Mano River Union on a study on the revitalization of the Union that is an integral part of the ECA initiative for post-conflict reconstruction of the Mano River Basin countries. ECA is collaborating with the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) on a study on the European Union (EU)-AMU integration process and on a workshop on harmonization of fiscal policies in the AMU region.

V. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

20. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has cooperated with a number of regional and subregional organizations in a spectrum of areas. In the area of sustainable human development, ESCWA has maintained long-standing relations with the League of Arab States and several of its subsidiary bodies, which were officialized through a Memorandum of Understanding in 1983, and renewed in 1995. One of the main areas of cooperation encompassed the convening of four regional preparatory meetings on integrated regional follow-up to the recommendations of four global conferences (the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the World Summit for Social Development and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)), which culminated in an Arab conference on the subject. In holding these meetings, ESCWA sought partnership with the League of Arab States to expand coverage and include all Arab member States and to ensure the utilization of common methodologies for follow-up action. ESCWA is also cooperating with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in providing training on population policies to propagate common mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation indicators and databases. In the field of the advancement of women, ESCWA is a member of the League of Arab States Technical Advisory Committee on regional projects for the advancement of women, which would ensure a common approach in this area. ESCWA, the League of Arab States and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) also cooperate in the issuance of a joint human settlements newsletter.

21. ESCWA and the League of Arab States also present papers at each other's meetings. For example, ESCWA presented a paper on the role of women in rural areas to the workshop organized by the League of Arab States and the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), in cooperation with UNEP/Regional Office for Western Asia on the role of women in protecting the environment against pollution and rationalizing the use of resources. The two organizations agreed that ESCWA would assume the role of distributing guidelines on the subject and would continue to support the League of Arab States on follow-up on issues relating to the role of women in protecting the environment.

22. In the area of statistics, the two organizations are pooling efforts in propagating the use of international standards and they intend to jointly produce a glossary of national accounts, based on the international System of National Accounts (SNA), which the League of Arab States had started and which the two organizations intend to continue by converging both efforts and resources. They also cooperate in producing a joint biennial publication entitled *Bulletin of Industrial Statistics*.

23. In the area of transport, consultation with the League of Arab States has led to adjusting the numbering system adopted for the Integrated Transport System for the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), developed by ESCWA, so as to accommodate the future inclusion of the North African Arab countries.

24. In the area of natural resources and the environment, ESCWA and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) cooperated in implementing projects on Arab regional priority areas related to Agenda 21.[2] CAMRE has in place a well-developed mechanism for this purpose, and ESCWA could utilize CAMRE's expertise in this area.

25. ESCWA and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) have been cooperating on issues relating to the conduct of household surveys in Palestinian camps in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Cooperation also involves undertaking a community development project, financed by AGFUND (it was started in Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic and replicated in other countries), with a view to replicating it in Lebanon.

26. There have been long-standing relations between ESCWA and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) in the field of industrial development, including World Trade Organization-related issues, standardization and the development of small- and medium-scale enterprises. During the reporting period, ESCWA, in cooperation with AIDMO, held a high-level meeting, which also involved the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), on the management and harmonization of standardization and conformity assessment in Arab countries (Rabat, November 1999) as a joint effort to build the capacities of national

standardization institutions in the region. The involvement of AIDMO enabled ESCWA to involve Arab countries at large.

27. ESCWA has been selected as a member of the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) Board of Trustees. Both organizations are undertaking joint programming and developing a common policy approach for the advancement of women.

28. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and ESCWA have maintained close cooperation which involved building infrastructure in the areas of transport and electricity and establishing a transport database for the GCC countries. ESCWA participated in the assessment of mechanisms of interregional and intraregional transport infrastructure in the Arab countries, undertaken by the GCC secretariat.

29. ESCWA and the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JEDAR) have demonstrated long-standing cooperation in jointly furthering consideration of environmental issues at the regional level, an example of which is the cosponsoring of an ESCWA meeting on adequacy of environmental legislation and promotion of enforcement mechanisms in the Arab countries (Beirut, June 1999), an issue of special significance to a region that suffers from a dearth of environmental legislation and the requisite enforcement mechanisms.

30. ESCWA also cooperates with a number of other regional organizations in mutual attendance, of and contribution to, meetings.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.